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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [AS](#)
SUBJECT: BENBRIKA PLUS 5 OTHERS GUILTY ON TERROR CHARGES

¶1. (SBU) A Victoria State Supreme court jury announced on September 15 that Abdul Benbrika and five co-defendants were found guilty under Australia's recent anti-terrorism legislation. Four of Benbrika's accomplices were acquitted and the verdicts of two others have yet to be announced. Local authorities told post that there has been little overt public reaction. While the appeals process may delay the anti-terrorism legislation's first firm conviction, Australian government officials on the state and national level are likely to tout the verdicts as a success. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Australian Federal Police confirmed to post that six men including Abdul Benbrika (alias Sheik Abu Bakr) were found guilty on terrorism charges. A Supreme Court jury announced on September 15 that Benbrika was guilty of "intentionally directing the activities of a terrorist organization, knowing that it was a terrorist organization." Benbrika and five accomplices were also found guilty of "intentionally being a member of a terrorist organization."

¶3. (SBU) Four other men were cleared of terror charges and walked free. The jury has not yet made public the verdict of two other men accused of similar terror charges. The jury has been considering a verdict for nearly four weeks on Benbrika's organization, which reportedly grew and operated between July 2004 and November 2005 in Melbourne's suburbs. Benbrika has not announced whether he will seek an appeal.

ALL QUIET

¶4. (SBU) Reaction to the announcement has been muted in Melbourne. Victoria Police report that no protests have been organized and will follow up with post promptly should a reaction materialize.

COMMENT

¶5. (SBU) The September 15 verdict is the first litmus test for Australia's nascent anti-terrorism legislation. While the appeals process may delay the legislation's first firm conviction, Australian government officials on the state and national level are likely to tout the verdicts as a success. It remains to be seen whether the oft-criticized legislation will withstand further legal scrutiny.

MCCALLUM